



**WWF** *for a living planet*

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Mr Stephen Corry  
Director  
Survival International  
6 Charterhouse Buildings  
London EC1M 7ET  
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27 May 2015

Dear Mr Corry,

Thank you for your letter of 27 March 2015.

The insinuation that WWF has done nothing and is doing nothing for the Baka is both untrue and insulting to the many WWF staff engaged for many years in securing rights for the Baka and supporting Baka communities.

I might remind you that our original suggestion to you in relation to the allegations you have raised was to engage directly with the Ministry of Social Affairs. Investigation by the Cameroon National Human Rights and Freedom Commission (NHRFC) was Survival's choice and if you are discontented with that choice, we suggest you take it up directly with the NHRFC.

WWF wrote to the NHRFC in October 2014 to inform them of our support for any investigation they might conduct into the issues and allegations raised by Survival International. We stand by that commitment. To date, we have not heard back from the Commission. As we do not know what issues and supporting material you brought before the Commission as a basis for their investigation, we have no ability to comment on the adequacy of the Commission's response.

Many of the issues you raise on land use decisions, recognition of indigenous rights and the behaviour of government employees are most directly matters for the Government of Cameroon.

WWF has long accepted obligations to negotiate and intercede with the Government on such issues, and in the process has won many concessions for the Baka and other communities. WWF would be prepared to assist arranging meetings between Survival and relevant Cameroon Government offices, if Survival wishes to take up its concerns directly with responsible agencies.

In south east Cameroon, Baka have had the opportunity to be involved in an extensive consultative and consent process around the zoning of the Jengi landscape which has seen the Baka achieve rights and recognition unavailable to Baka and other indigenous peoples in Cameroon.

Currently, the most promising avenues for extending rights and recognition to more of Cameroon's indigenous peoples are associated with Cameroon Government reviews of some policies and with UN requirements for projects to reduce carbon emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+). WWF is significantly engaged in these processes, including for instance in being a major contributor and facilitator of community inputs into Cameroon's first guidelines for implementation of Free, Prior, Informed Consent (FPIC). \*

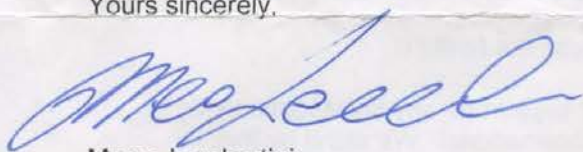


We also believe, as do others, that discrimination and mistreatment of the Baka have been exacerbated since 2009 by the linkages between increased abundance of military weaponry, armed conflict over nearby borders, a refugee influx increasing demands on forest resources, an upsurge in organised poaching and a greater military presence in this sensitive border area. We do not, however, accept that there are no means for Baka or others to report abuse – there is a MinFoF hotline, community chiefs have a number of avenues open to them, our experience is that WWF employees and consultants, particularly those working with the communities on social programmes, are readily approached, as are NGOs in the community. We do agree that mechanisms for communities and individuals to provide information of abuse from any quarter need to be formalised and are working on this quite complex issue – not least by ensuring that communities know of available mechanisms. WWF also has its own independent mechanisms for staff or others to raise issues with the conduct of WWF or WWF staff, and we are reviewing how these can be made more readily accessible in regions such as south east Cameroon.

As you may now appreciate, the indigenous rights situation in Cameroon is complex and evolving. The option of removing WWF's proportion of funding for forest protection is both simplistic and likely to cause greater harm to the Baka themselves. The Ecoguard service is providing the services it was intended to, which significantly includes protecting forests, wildlife and access important to Baka culture, livelihoods and welfare. Baka communities we work with are not asking us to suspend protection of forests – indeed, a common key ask of communities during the consultation and consent process for the protected areas in south east Cameroon was for stronger action on poaching.

Survival International appears to have a practice of posting its correspondence to other organisations on its site but not of posting their replies. We also note that you include no facility for comment on your website, which does not allow for any correction of incomplete information or misinformation. Once you remedy this situation, we can return to the discussion of collaborative action to benefit the Baka.

Yours sincerely,



Marco Lambertini  
Director General

\* Operational Guidelines for Obtaining Free, Prior and Informed Consent in REDD+ Initiatives in Cameroon - including Principles, Criteria and Indicators.

[http://loggingoff.info/sites/loggingoff.info/files/062014\\_Cameroon%20National%20FPIC%20Guidelines\\_EN.pdf](http://loggingoff.info/sites/loggingoff.info/files/062014_Cameroon%20National%20FPIC%20Guidelines_EN.pdf)